

individuals are going to live that long, because what we are faced with is a declining number of workers paying their tax in that immediately is spent out in benefits.

I mean Social Security has been a pay-as-you-go program ever since it started in 1935. In other words, current workers pay in their taxes to pay the benefits of current retirees. When we started in 1935 and up through the 1940s, we had about 41 people working, paying in their taxes, for every one retiree. Today there is three people working paying in their taxes for every one retiree. By 2030 we are expecting that there is only going to be two people working. That means that those two people have to earn enough to provide for their families plus one retiree.

Huge challenges. Let us be careful. Let us rededicate ourselves not to spend the Social Security surplus. It is a good start.

#### STATE OF THE FARM ECONOMY IN AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. NETHERCUTT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. NETHERCUTT. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to talk for a few minutes today about the state of the farm economy in America. I have listened with interest over the last hour or so to a number of Members come to the floor and speak passionately about the problems that exist in our agriculture sector of our economy across this Nation.

I am proud to hail from the east side of the State of Washington, a location which grows abundant crops, lots of grains, wheat, oats, peas and lentils and other commodities, most of which are exported overseas. When the farm bill policy of our country was adopted back in 1996, it was met, I think, with general acceptance in my part of the country, that this is a good policy change for our farmers, that they would farm for the market and not just for the Government, and the continual subsidies that had been in existence for many, many years under long-term farm policy in this country would see a change.

There would be a reduction over a period of time in the subsidies that had been provided, a marked transition payment assistance program that ultimately would get our farmers into a world market condition where the market would meet the needs, the income needs, of the farmer and not to have the farmer necessarily turn to the Government repeatedly year after year.

This was a good change. I think it was a positive change. For those of us in Congress who feel that the free market is the best way to go, a free market economy is the best, it in many re-

spects caused some problems for our farmers because while on the one hand the Federal Government would say we are going to adopt a free market economy in agriculture, but yet we are not going to provide markets overseas for our farmers to market to, which brings me to the point that I want to make this evening:

That is that in order for our farmers to survive, those in eastern Washington as well as other parts of the country, we must have open markets. Currently our country has a policy of putting embargoes on countries with whom we disagree government to government. I happen to be proudly a member of the Committee on Appropriations, the Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies, which now has before it an issue regarding sanctions relief as part of the evolving policy to assist our farmers across this country.

I think our policy as a general proposition ought to be that we lift sanctions on food and medicine to countries around the world, not providing assistance government to government, but providing assistance to the people of the countries with whom we disagree and their leadership with whom we disagree, providing assistance to those countries in a market-oriented system that allows them to buy our farm products, to purchase them, not to give them, not for us to assist terrorist governments. That is not the intent of anybody in my judgment who supports lifting of sanctions, but to provide assistance to American farmers who are shut out of markets around the world that other countries are not shut out of.

So what happens is that a farmer, the government of Australia or Canada or the European Union has the ability to go into markets that we are frozen out of, American farmers are frozen out of, and underbid prices to sell products, commodities, to those countries; and then in those countries with which they can compete with us, they will undercut us even more. They will raise the prices in the sanctioned countries to get the sale, they will lower the prices in the competing countries in order to beat us out of a sale.

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Iran is a prime example. I disagree absolutely with the government of Iran and their policies of terrorism around the world and oppression, but they are buying wheat from Canada, Australia, and the European Union. Americans are getting nothing from nor realizing any sales to this country.

So my argument is that before the Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Agriculture, we have the issue of sanctions relief. I think we ought to have sanctions relief in this bill. It is an opportunity for us to say

we are not going to use food and medicine as a weapon of foreign policy.

Iran cannot shoot grain back at us, but they can sure buy our grain and help our agriculture community in eastern Washington and around the country that want to sell to this country.

I know there is a problem with Cuba, and I understand that issue. And I am willing as one Member of the House to address that issue and discuss it and try to come to some reasonable solution about it, given the political consequences of some Members of the House. But I think as a general proposition, Mr. Speaker, we ought to raise sanctions, lift them, so that our agriculture community can survive in a free market system in the years ahead.

#### TAXPAYER FUNDING FOR OFFENSIVE ART

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. MCINNIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I do not know how many Members have been keeping track of what is going on in New York City, but I think the repercussions of what is going on in New York City really sweep across the entire country, especially when it pertains to two different groups, one, the taxpayers, and, two, the art community.

Let me start at the beginning of my comments to let you know that I have supported the art community. I have in the past voted for the NEA to support their art with taxpayer dollars. I have, however, on a number of occasions cautioned the arts community, do not go spending this money on careless or offensive art. If you have careless or offensive art, what you need to do to fund that is to go out and raise the money privately or have the individuals do it on their own in a display somewhere else.

That is not a violation of the Constitution or a violation of freedom of speech, to go to an individual who is an artist and say, look, your piece of work is too offensive. We are not going to pay for it with taxpayer dollars. That is not to say that you are banned in the United States from displaying your art. You do have freedom of speech; you may display your art. It is just that the taxpayers are not going to pay for it.

So what happens in New York City? Do you think the art community, especially some of the prima donnas in the art community, listen to that kind of advice? Of course they do not. They decide to draw the line in the sand.

Do you know what kind of line they are drawing? They say, look, we have a picture, a portrait of the Virgin Mary, and it has elephant dung, in my country it is known as crap, elephant crap,

thrown on the portrait of the Virgin Mary. That is where they decide they should draw the line. They want that to be continued to be funded by taxpayer dollars.

Mayor Giuliani comes out and says this is offensive. Of course it is offensive. I wonder what the black community would do if Martin Luther King's portrait was there and had crap thrown on it. I wonder what those of us who are concerned about AIDS in this country would do if they put an AIDS blanket on there and threw crap on it.

Of course it is offensive. Those communities would not tolerate it. They would probably take down the building. But I guess it is okay for the arts community in New York City, or at least the leadership of the prima donnas, to say it is all right to offend the Catholic religion and to offend Christians throughout the country.

Let me tell you, the Jewish community could be next. For all I know, this museum might put on the swastika and say it is beautiful art and should be paid for by the taxpayer dollars.

I am urging the art community, Mayor Giuliani is right in this case, and you know he is right. Those are taxpayer dollars. Do not offend the taxpayer, do not offend religions across this world, by allowing the Virgin Mary display in your museum at taxpayer expense.

You have plenty of patrons, plenty of rich patrons that support the arts community. Go to your patrons and say look, will you fund this offensive display? By the way, I would be surprised if you have many that do. But will you fund this display of the Virgin Mary with crap thrown all over it? Will you fund it somewhere else, so we do not have to go to the taxpayer?

It is amazing to me. Even the New York Times ran an editorial today, and they say what a courageous stand this art museum is taking by standing up and saying we have the right at taxpayers' expense to display a portrait of the Virgin Mary with crap thrown on it.

I wonder where the New York Times would be if that was an AIDS blanket. I wonder where the New York Times would be if that was a portrait of Martin Luther King or a symbol of the Jewish religion.

It is amazing to me that the art community defies common sense every opportunity they seem to have. I am telling you in New York City and my colleagues that represent New York City, let me tell you, you are hurting the arts community across the United States.

One other point I want to make, if you do think in New York City that this art and that what you have done here does not extend across the country, I am getting calls in my district, the 3rd Congressional District of Colorado. That is the mountains. It is a

long ways away from New York City. But I have got constituents, rightfully so, very, very upset about the fact that you in New York City in that arts community, the prima donnas, are funding with taxpayer dollars that picture, that portrait of the Virgin Mary with dung thrown on it, and stand up and have the gall to defend it.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. McINNIS. I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Recently we have, of course, seen a terrible situation where young Christians were murdered and attacked by someone down in Texas. Does the gentleman believe that perhaps some of this vitriol he is talking about could have resulted in that type of violence against Christians? We will leave that for the public.

#### REFINEMENTS TO THE BALANCED BUDGET ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. RAMSTAD) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. RAMSTAD. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in frustration, frustration with the government agency that may even be more unpopular than the IRS, if you can believe it. My friends on the Health Subcommittee of Ways and Means and many other colleagues on both sides of the aisle know exactly who I am talking about, the Healthcare Financing Administration, or HCFA.

Mr. Speaker, on Friday of this week our Health Subcommittee will be holding a hearing on refinements to the Balanced Budget Amendment, or BBA. As we plan for this hearing, I hope the administration will not appear before us again in the subcommittee and insult our intelligence. I will be asking some tough questions about their handling of the Medicare program recently, and I hope I do not hear that the agency is unable to address the concerns we are hearing about from seniors across the Nation, and also from Medicare providers, because the agency's hands are completely tied by prescriptive BBA language. That is the constant refrain we get from HCFA, the agency's hands are completely tied by prescriptive BBA language.

We hear these lines about prescriptive language and Congressional intent when the administration does not want to do things, but when it does want to act, when it does want to do something, it is perfectly comfortable with ignoring bill language or Congressional intent.

Some of the problems we are hearing about in Medicare from health care providers are all results of actual BBA language. Yes, they are. The Health Subcommittee is planning to provide relief in those areas. But, as Senator ROTH and Chairman THOMAS have said

recently, there is also a lot HCFA can do.

The BBA gives HCFA significant power over how things are implemented. The risk adjuster for Medicare+Choice payments is a perfect example. Many of my colleagues and I have heard concerns about the risk adjuster the administration has designed. One very important concern is how this risk adjuster will impact some very special programs, especially innovative programs that seniors want and that the frail elderly seniors need so desperately.

HCFA obviously understands the grave impact the interim risk adjuster will have on these programs. In fact, HCFA exempted them from the risk adjuster for the first year. But the argument which compelled the agency to exempt them for one year remains the same and just as powerful for all the years under the interim risk adjuster.

Now, I might be just a plain Norwegian from Lake Woebegone, Mr. Speaker, but even I cannot understand why the agency is not exempting them for the entire interim period. That just makes good common Governor Jessie Ventura sense. If they have the authority to do it for 1 year, it seems they have the authority to do it for multiple years. Conversely, if they do not have authority for all the years, then how do they have the authority to do it for one?

I see nothing in the BBA which prohibits the agency from exempting them for more than 1 year. Even if I were to accept HCFA's claim that only Congressional action allows a multiple-year exemption, that still would not allow me to understand why HCFA is not supporting the bill I introduced to provide the multiple exemption. They tell providers, well, we need Congress to pass a bill. So I introduced one. Then they come up with the multiple weak arguments against the bill.

Mr. Speaker, I am offering to address any substantive concerns in a reasonable way, in a reasonable common-sense way, and I hope we will be having such an exchange on Friday in the Health Subcommittee. I invite the administration to join me for the sake of frail, eligible, elderly beneficiaries in Minnesota and across this Nation.

#### UNITED STATES-CHINA MILITARY EXCHANGES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. ROHRABACHER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Mr. Speaker, 2 days ago, the U.S. Secretary of Defense, William Cohen, told reporters that he hopes the U.S. military will resume contacts with the Communist Chinese military. At the very same time that Secretary Cohen was speaking, in Shanghai, Chinese dictator